MASS
EA 1.2: C38

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

* UMASS/AMHERST *
312066 0270 8133 6

Government Documents
Collection
JUL 1971
University of Massachusetts

CHARLES RIVER STUDY: OUTDOOR RECREATION & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

CHARLES RIVER STUDY

OUTDOOR RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION PLAN

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS • DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

in cooperation with the

U. S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

MAY 1971

FRANCIS W. SARGENT
Governor

ARTHUR W. BROWNELL
Commissioner

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Boston Library Consortium Member Libraries

http://archive.org/details/charlesriverstud00mass

CHARLES RIVER CORRIDOR PROTECTION PLAN

"Thou Has Been a Generous Giver"

TO THE RIVER CHARLES

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

BEFORE ITS TOO LATE

One hundred years ago, the 307 square mile area of the Charles River Watershed was largely fields, farms and forests. Downstream from Waltham Dam it was inhabited by some 200,000 persons. Today its population has soared to almost one million, and nearly one-fourth of the valley is covered with houses, schools, offices and industries. The once "limitless" open-spaces have given way to urban sprawl; prospects are dim for halting urbanization.....unless definite community actions are taken with state and federal aid to conserve the remaining natural environment.

ACTION PLAN

To accomplish this objective, the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources, in conjunction with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, proposes a plan to permanently protect and preserve open space for outdoor recreation and environmental enhancement in the Charles River Watershed. With the Metropolitan District Commission already controlling most of both banks of the lower Charles River, fulfillment of this plan would create a continuous corridor of protected land from Boston Harbor to Echo Lake in Milford and Hopkinton.

Proceeding in two stages, the plan calls for both private and public action to reserve by 1985 some 22,000 acres of land in perpetuity for outdoor recreation and environmental conservation. The first stage -- to be completed by 1975 -- calls for reservation, by a variety of actions of some 11,000 acres along a one-mile wide corridor, extending one-half mile each side of the Charles River between Watertown Dam and Echo Lake. Added to the 9,740 acres already under public or semi-public control in this stretch of the River, such action would permanently protect the entire length of the mainstream including all major bordering wetlands and headwaters slopes, as well as selected portions of major tributaries.

The second stage -- hopefully completed by 1985 -- calls for protecting and preserving an additional 11,000 acres to secure spring-freshet storage locations off the River and to enlarge outdoor recreation capabilities in the Charles River Watershed beyond the corridor.

THE QUALITY OF LIVING

In many vital ways the preservation of the land in the Charles

River Watershed would improve the quality of urban living. Preservation would assist flood management, protect town water resources and assist the control and gradual elimination of pollution in the River. For the landowner this cannot help but increase the value of property in the watershed. Also fish, and wild life could be increased in the Charles River wetlands. Most important, such lowland preservation would provide forever a continuous scenic and recreational water-way.

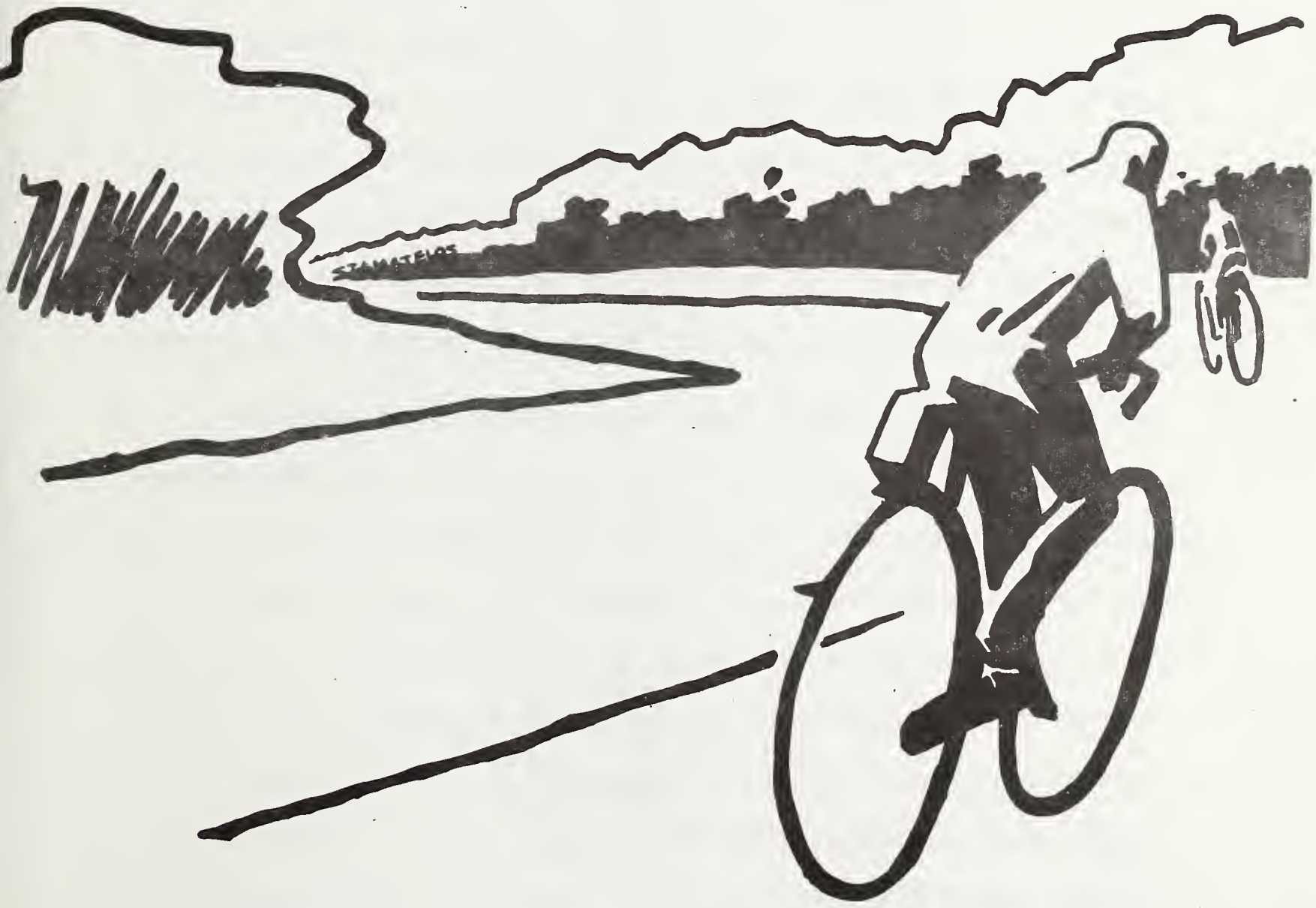
The plan envisages fishing and boating; and in some places, where water quality has been considerably improved by pollution abatement projects, there will be swimming again in the River. Along the banks will be hiking and bicycle paths, nature study and picnic areas and scenic overlooks. Utilizing the State's great cultural heritage, a network of interpretative Trails -- colonial, industrial, educational -- will also follow the river way. While suburbanized land cannot be returned to wilderness, the actions planned will enable people to canoe silently through wooded areas on the winding River between South Natick and Medway Dam within twenty miles from the State House. Or watch wild geese feeding and mink stalking fish in the 5,000 acre Millis-Medfield-Norfolk marshes.

HOW CAN THE LAND BE PRESERVED?

The DNR and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers propose to coordinate

a variety of private, municipal, state and federal actions, but fundamental to all action is the concept of local choice and direction. Landowners, private trusts, municipal boards and officials, and non-profit organizations, are asked to take the initiative.

Of the approximately 11,000 acres to be protected under stage one of the plan, the DNR recommends that some 5,315 acres be reserved by public protection regulations and the remaining 5,685 acres be acquired



either through gifts or public purchase.

In Massachusetts, legislative devices to implement protection of the Charles River corridor are varied and effective. Among these are municipal flood-zoning, municipal and metropolitan water-supply and sanitary controls, the Massachusetts Inland Wetlands Act, and federal flood storage land regulations.

Perhaps the best law to stimulate private action is the 1969 Conservation Restriction Act. This statute provides a range of ways whereby private citizens can protect their land without loss of value, enjoyment or title. Owners can transfer among themselves, or to town, state, federal, or non-profit organizations the rights to keep open and not build on river banks or wetlands. Another approach is for a property owner to present his land outright as a gift to such organizations as the Audubon Society or Trustees of Reservations.

To encourage local government action, the DNR so far has assisted eighteen municipalities in the Charles River Watershed to acquire 824 acres of recreational-conservation lands. The cost: $2.3 million, of which $500,000 has been reimbursed since 1966 under the U. S. Land and Water Conservation Fund by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. At present seven communities are purchasing an additional 816 acres. To insure protection of all the proposed 11,000 acres in the Charles River corridor, the State, through DNR, will supplement local action by acquiring about 2,465 acres. The DNR's lands will be managed and

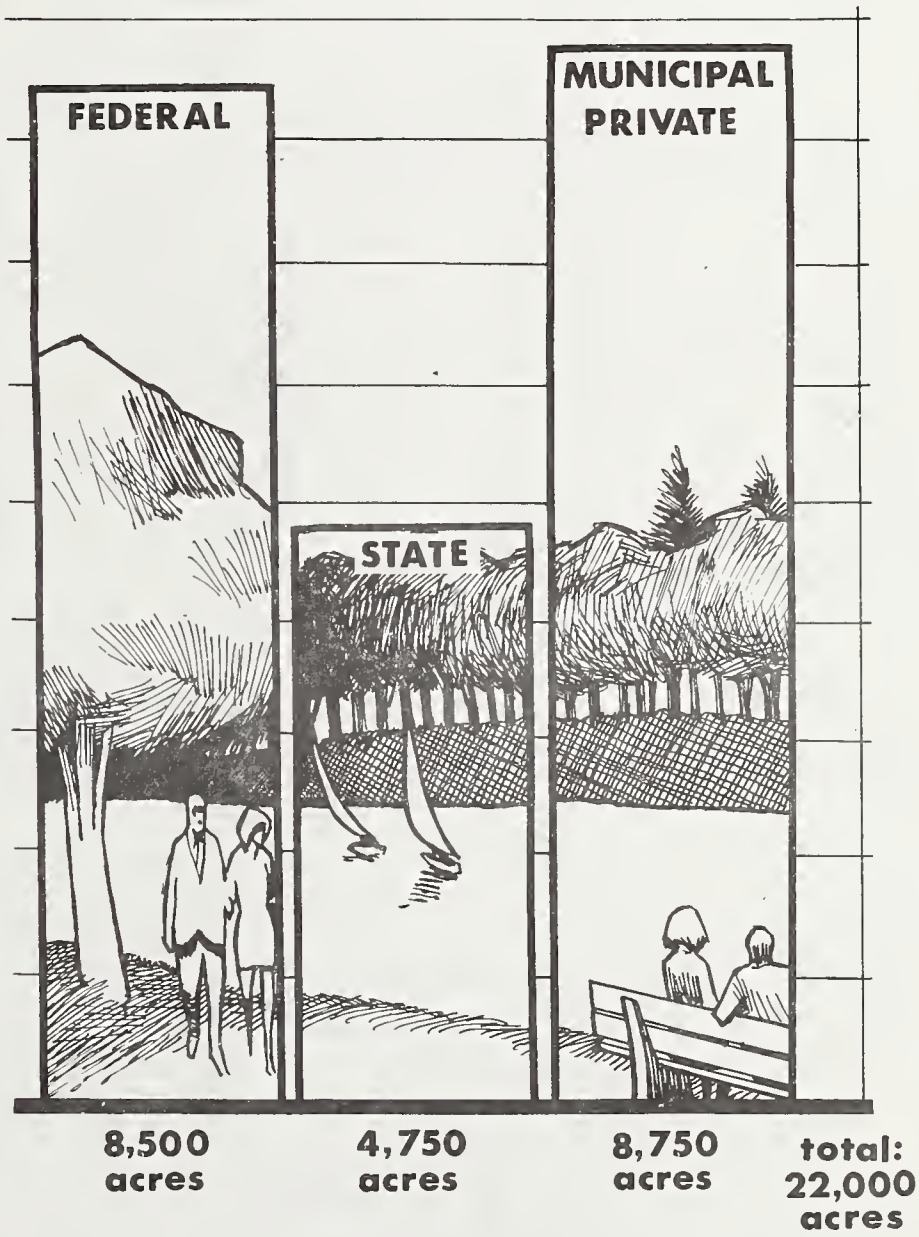
operated by the Division of Forests and Parks for outdoor recreational opportunities and environmental enhancement.

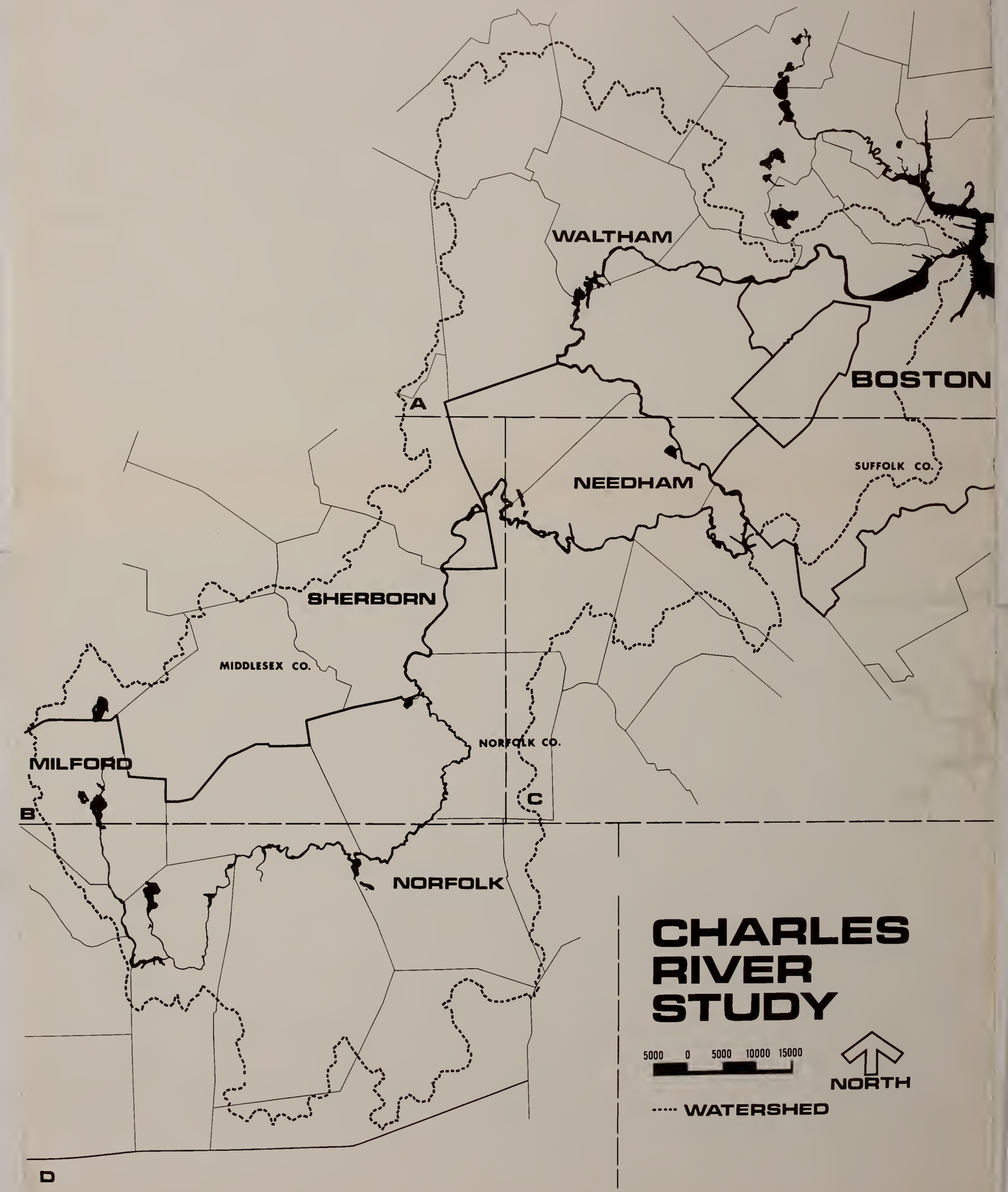
To protect areas not currently covered by proposes federal, municipal and MDC action, DNR proposed that completion of the Charles River Action Program be funded by a bond issue. This would be a tiny debt to pay for protecting forever one of Massachusetts' greatest natural assets.

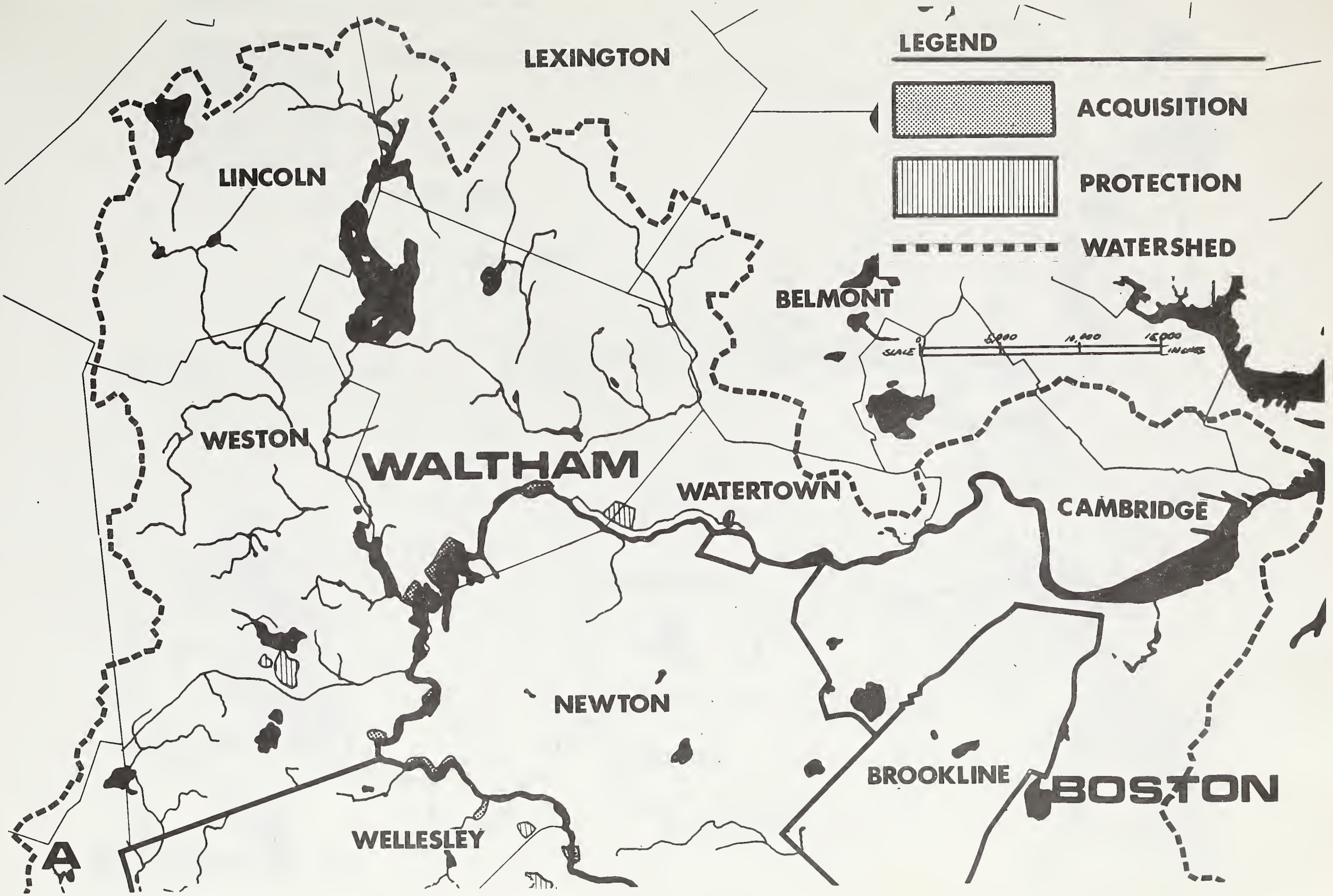
CHARLES RIVER CORRIDOR PROTECTION PLAN

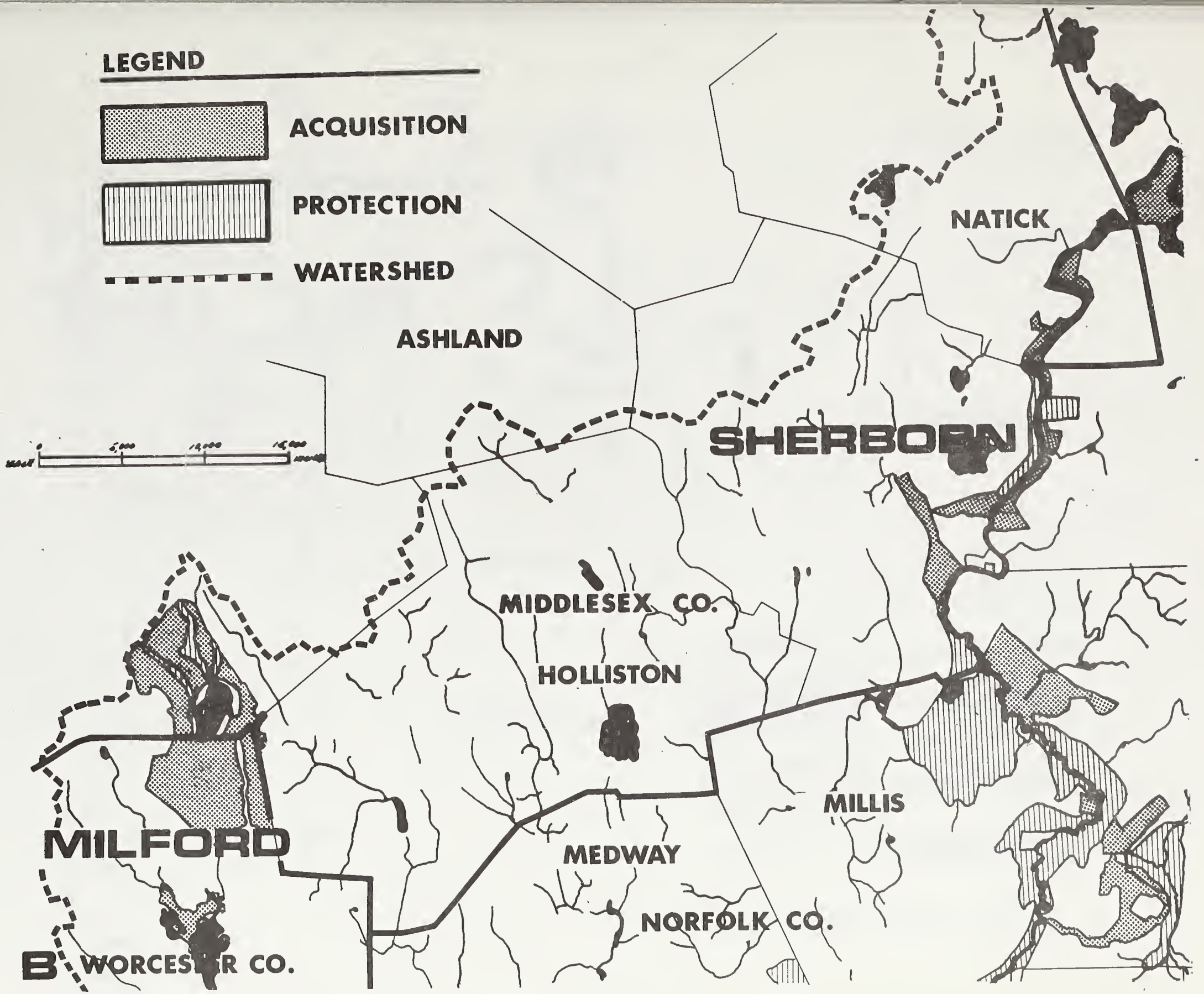
PROPOSED LAND PRESERVATION*

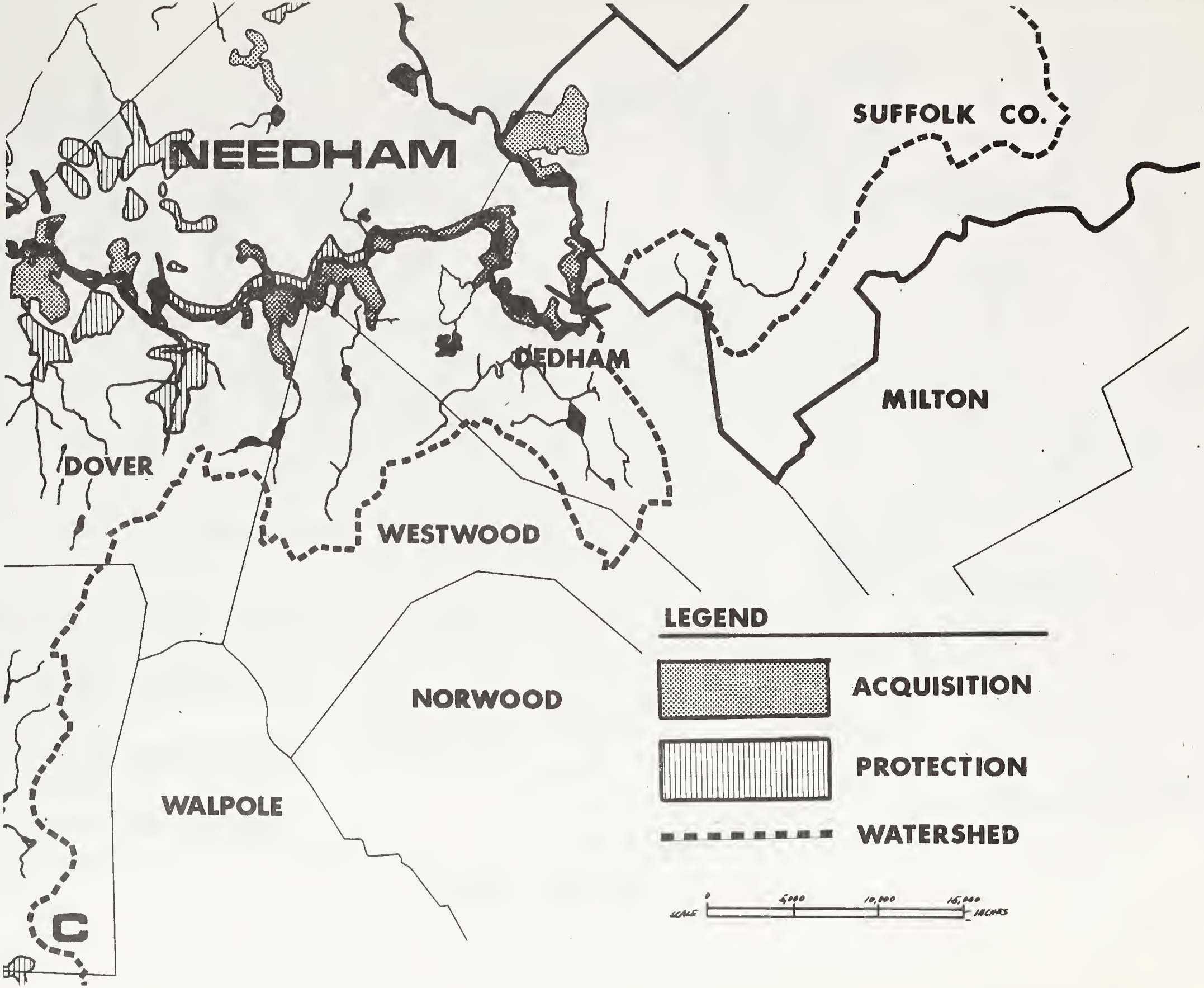
*INCLUDES LANDS EITHER ACQUIRED OR PROTECTED BY CONSERVATION RESTRICTION

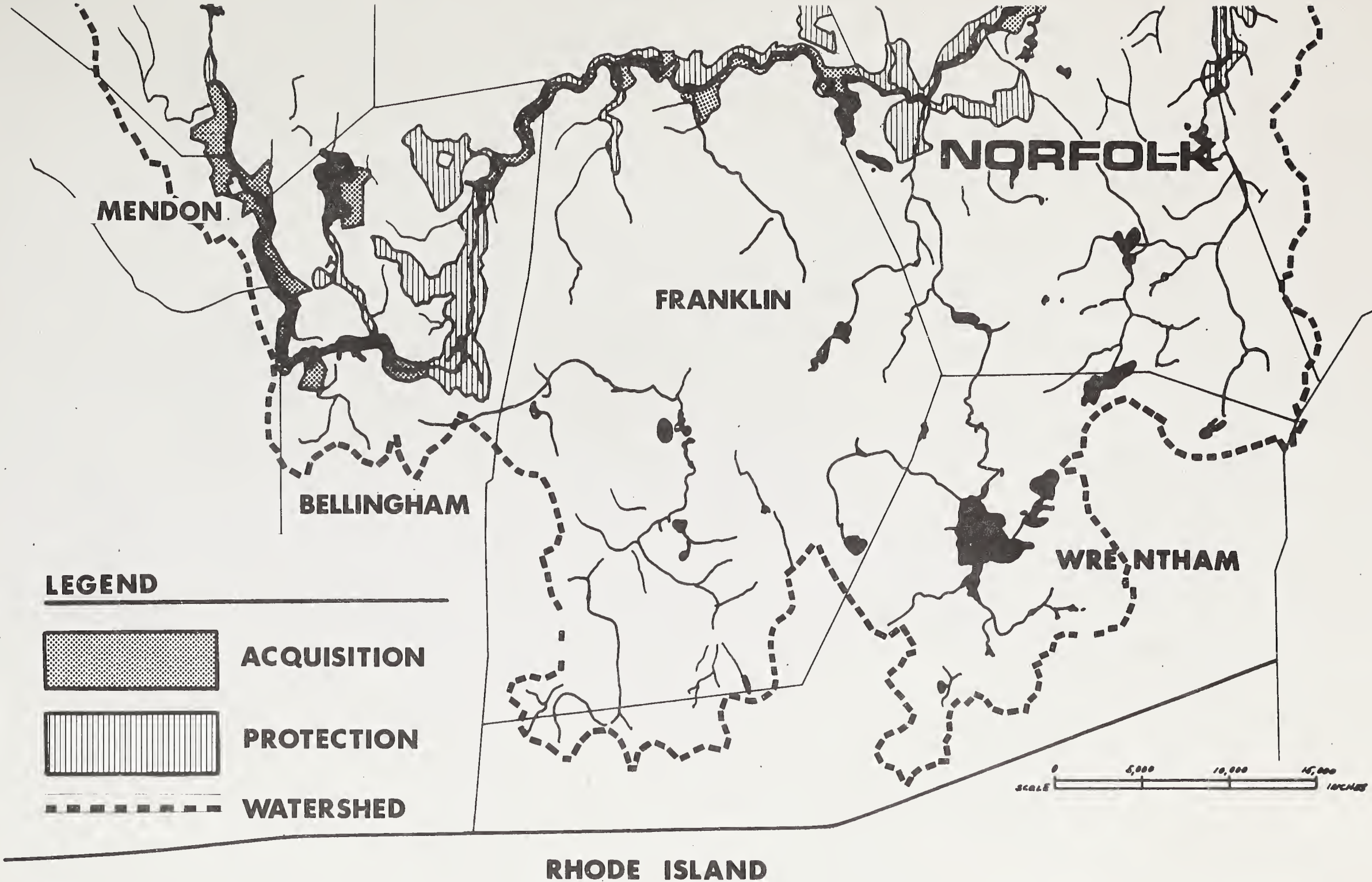



WALTHAM
BOSTON
A
NEEDHAM
SUFFOLK CO.
SHERBORN
MIDDLESEX CO.
NORFOLK CO.
MILFORD
B
C
NORFOLK
D
CHARLES RIVER STUDY
5000 0 5000 10000 15000
NORTH
WATERSHED


LEGEND
ACQUISITION
PROTECTION
WATERSHED
LEXINGTON
LINCOLN
BELMONT
SCALE
0
5,000
10,000
15,000
INCHES
WESTON
WALTHAM
WATERTOWN
CAMBRIDGE
NEWTON
BROOKLINE
BOSTON
WELLESLEY


LEGEND
ACQUISITION
PROTECTION
WATERSHED
ASHLAND
NATICK
SHERBORN
MIDDLESEX CO.
HOLLISTON
MILLIS
MEDWAY
NORFOLK CO.
MILFORD
WORCESTER CO.


NEEDHAM
SUFFOLK CO.
DEDHAM
MILTON
DOVER
WESTWOOD
NORWOOD
WALPOLE
LEGEND
ACQUISITION
PROTECTION
WATERSHED
SCALE
0
5,000
10,000
15,000
INCHES


MENDON
BELLINGHAM
FRANKLIN
NORFOLK
WRENTHAM
LEGEND
ACQUISITION
PROTECTION
WATERSHED
RHODE ISLAND

D